

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L L I M A 5 7 7 8

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PE

SUBJECT: PERUVIAN INDEPENDENT PRESS ENDANGERED

REF: LIMA 5552

USIA FOR ILA

1. GILBERTO ESCUDERO, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL GAZETTE EL PERUANO AND MEMBER OF TEN-MAN GOVERNMENT COMMISSION STUDYING NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP IN PERU, HAS TOLD PAO AND I.O. THAT GOVERNMENT PLANS TO GO AHEAD WITH ANNOUNCEMENT TO EXPROPRIATE PRIVATELY OWNED NEWSPAPERS AND TURN THEM OVER TO ECONOMIC SECTORS. ESCUDERO SAID GOP WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE PLAN JULY 28 BUT IS STILL STUDYING DETAILS AND FIRM DATE NOT SET. HE DESCRIBED PLAN AS "NEW CONCEPT" BUT WILL NOT INVOLVE STATE OWNERSHIP, ALTHOUGH WILL REQUIRE EXPROPRIATION WITH COMPENSATION OF PRIVATE STOCKHOLDINGS.

2. THE FEDERACION DE PERIODISTAS MODERATE FACTION LED BY LA PRENSA COLUMNIST ARTURO SALAZAR LARRAIN SUNDAY PUBLISHED STATEMENT IN PAID ADVERTISEMENTS IN THREE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS AS FOLLOWS:

"IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO OWNS NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING FIRMS; WHAT
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MATTERS IS THAT THE PERUVIAN PEOPLE HAVE A GAMUT OF INFORMATION

AND OPINION THAT WILL PERMIT THEM TO CHOOSE FREELY AND THAT WE THE NEWSPAPERMEN HAVE FREEDOM TO FORM OPINIONS AND EXPRESS OUR THINKING OPENLY AND FRANKLY WITHOUT FEAR AND ONLY WITH THE OBLIGATION TO TELL THE TRUTH." IT ADDS: "THE FEDERATION EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN FOR THE ABSENCE OF DIALOGUE AND LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT SUCH A TRANSCENDENTAL PROJECT AS CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA, ESPECIALLY SINCE OTHER PROJECTS HAVE BEEN DEBATED IN PUBLIC." THE FEDERATION SAYS PURPOSE OF STATEMENT IS "TO STAND UP FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE DEFENSE OF THE SACRED RIGHTS OF PERUVIAN JOURNALISM AND FOR THE DEFENSE OF JOBS OF MEN WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN THE PUBLISHING FIRMS." IN ITS OPENING PARAGRAPH THE FEDERATION, WHICH INCLUDES A MAJORITY OF THE WORKING NEWSPAPERMEN, SAYS "VARIED AND INSISTENT VERSION ABOUT A NEW STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNICATION MEDIA" CAUSE THE FEDERATION TO BECOME DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND EXPRESSION IN PERU.

3. IN MONDAY'S LEFTIST EXPRESO AND GOVERNMENT-OWNED LA NUEVA CRONICA THE FEDERACION OF PERIODISTAS FAR LEFT FACTION PUBLISHES A STATEMENT ATTACKING THE MODERATE FACTION'S POSITION AS BEING "THE PATRONAL VIEWPOINT" AND BACKS "AN INTEGRAL SOLUTION" TO OWNERSHIP OF THE NEWSPAPERS.

4. COMMENT: THE 10-MAN COMMISSION STILL HAS NOT MADE ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND THE PRESENT PLANS, WHICH SEEM TO POINT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF OUTRIGHT EXPROPRIATION, DO NOT AUGUR PARTICULARLY WELL FOR THE FUTURE OF A FREE PRESS IN PERU. HOWEVER, THERE IS OPPOSITION TO SUCH A MOVE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES TO FULL EXPROPRIATION REMAIN AVAILABLE TO PRESIDENT VELASCO SHOULD HE DECIDE NOT TO GO THE FULL ROUTE AT THIS TIME. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THE ISSUE OF PRESS FREEDOM WILL REMAIN A CONTENTIOUS ONE UP TO AND INCLUDING JULY 28 AND PROBABLY FOR SOME TIME AFTERWARDS AS WELL.
DEAN

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